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ABSTRACT

This paper claims that leadership, as a topic, has been disguised in behaviorism and obscured by organizational theory and management. The article examines the theories or metanarratives that have dominated educational administration and shows how they have covered and disguised leadership. It argues that the metanarratives--trait theory, behaviorism, structuralism, behavioral structuralism, broad fields, critical theory, and feminism--submerge leadership as other issues, such as management theory, are pursued. It asserts that all these metanarratives rest on the fallacy of an objectified self, which, even if influenced by language and culture, is believed to be benign so that the veil covering leadership can be lifted. Yet the record in this respect is paltry, and critical theory has not produced any expanded vision for the nature of leadership. The article focuses on the literature of feminism and the argument by postmodernists that one cannot think without prejudice, that is, all perspectives are grounded in certain pre-assumptions that actively shape perception. The article concludes with the work of Jacques Lacan and Howard Gardner and their critique of behavioral psychology, positing that Lacan and Gardner offer an alternative to the obscurantist view of leadership that has become prevalent. Contains 21 references. (RJM)

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"Looking Behind the Veil: Addressing the Enigma of Leadership"

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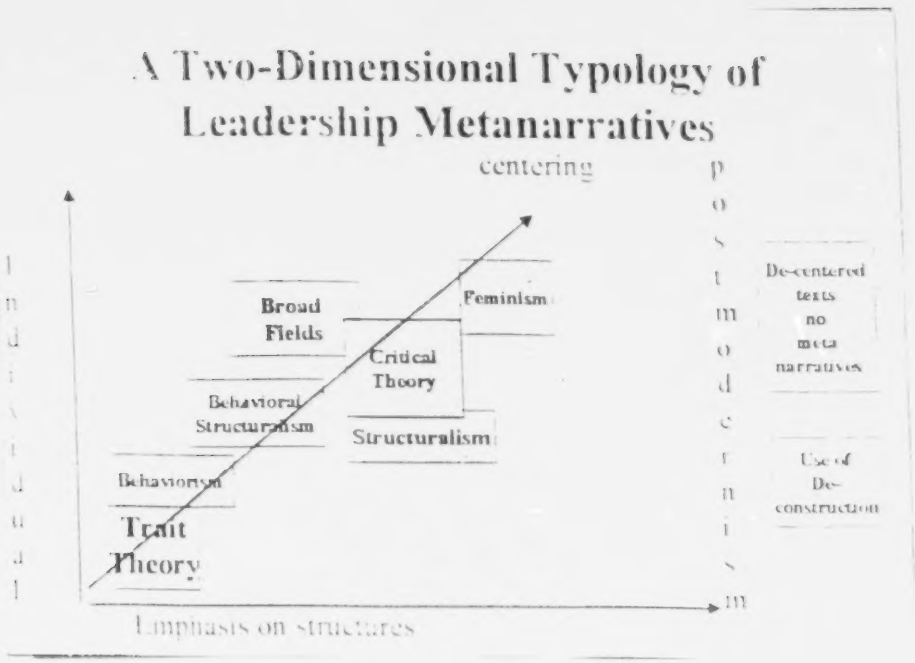
A "veil" is an appropriate metaphor in approaching the topic of leadership in educational administration. A veil is a covering or disguise. It can also mean an obscuration. In addition, it has a connotation about adopting a kind of lifestyle as in "to take the veil." This paper will proffer that leadership is a topic that has been disguised, first in behaviorism and then obscured in organizational theory and management. Finally, scholars who venture forth to probe the mysteries of the veil become lost in the transformations of leadership in the modern scientific lexicon. Most end up "taking the veil" and defending their methods, despite the disquieting notion that the very theories employed to remove the obfuscation have led to its continuance.

Rost (1991) has been among the scholars who have argued that the approach used in probing the mysteries of leadership have been the culprit in its refusal to enable researchers to come to grips with the core of the matter (p. 182). It is in Rost's (1991) intriguing pose that I consider a different tack in approaching the topic of leadership. The pose is this: suppose the perspective itself has prevented us from being able to probe more deeply about the essence of leading? It is this line of inquiry that I wish to pursue here. It is also a "turn" in the preceding lines of inquiry. I want to examine the very theories or metanarratives which have dominated educational administration and show how they covered and disguised leadership and finally how they obscured it, leading to the blurring of leadership and covering it with management and organizational theories.

In a previous work I offered a typology of metanarratives of leadership (English, 1994;. 99-132). These are the perspectives, which while initially regarded as conjectures or hypotheses, ended up being accepted dogma and elevated beyond serious questioning in educational administration. As such, they became part of the veil surrounding leadership itself. These metanarratives were trait theory, behaviorism, structuralism, behavioral structuralism, broad fields, critical theory and feminism (see Exhibit 1). There are common presuppositions which are embedded in all of these theories. In fact, there are slippages, which if examined closely, connect them. Watching the rise of these metanarratives one is struck by how leadership became submerged in a pursuit of other issues such as management theory which were centered while it (leadership) became marginalized. The shifts in metanarratives beginning with trait theory are displayed two dimensionally as: (1) the vertical axis with its emphasis on the individual as a leader, and: (2) the horizontal axis as in the emphasis on structures or structural units. Structural units can be observable

Exhibit 1



actions or manifestations such as traits (including leadership, good judgment, breadth of interest, resourcefulness, poise, etc. see Lide, 1929) in trait theory or behavioral actions (Simon, 1945; Cyert and March, 1963;). Or units can be abstractions such as climates (McGregor, 1960; Halpin, 1966) or cultures (Deal and Kennedy, 1982) or organizational structures (Mintzberg, 1983) or types (Blau and Scott,1962;). Another way abstractions can be seen as structures is as academic fields such as sociology, psychology, or anthropology (Burns, 1978; Barber, 1985; (or in the presence of the lenses (as pre-suppositions) at work in critical theory (Foster,1986; Maxcy, 1991) as class conflict or in feminism as gender hegemony. (Shakeshaft, 1989; Bem, 1993). Each of these metanarratives centers some aspects of reality and marginalizes others. Only critical theory and feminism have displayed sensitivity to linguistic patterns and social contexts, but they have not de-centered their narrative lenses by which they engage in critique or prescription.

All of these metanarratives rest on the fallacy of an objectified self, which even if impacted by language and culture are believed to be benign so that the veil covering the visage of leadership can be lifted. Yet the record in this respect is paltry. Critical theory has not produced any expanded vision for the nature of

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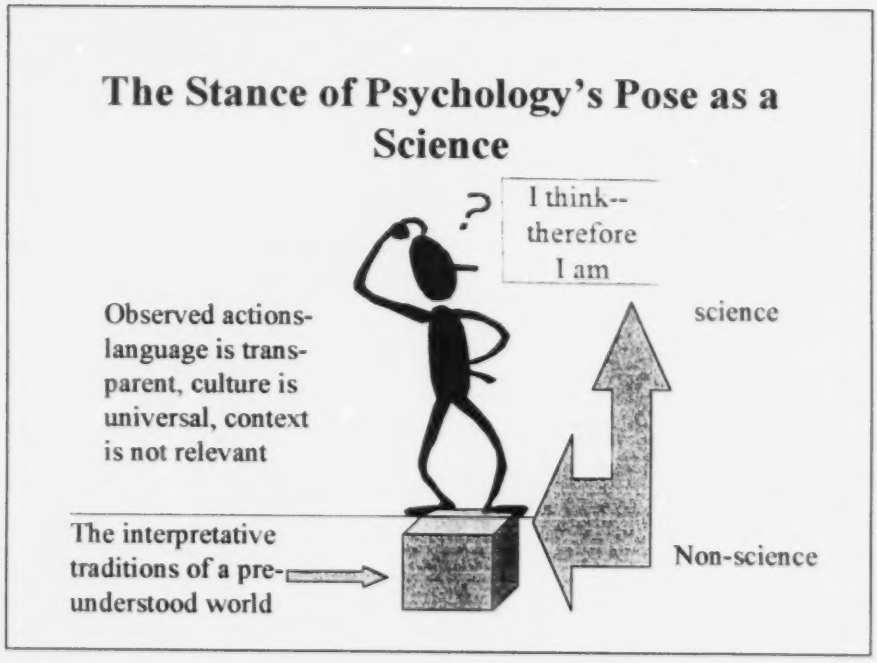
leadership. The literature of feminism has offered female attributes brought to educational administration lacking in males, but has failed to produce any deeper understanding of leadership per se when the persons who are leaders are women themselves .The postmodern perspective or sometimes called the "postmodern moment" focuses clearly on the failure of the modern scientific lens to lift the veil of leadership. The central perspective on this critical shortcoming of the methods and assumptions utilized to understand leadership has been the topic of Usher and Edwards (1996) in their critique of psychology and science. Since all of the major metanarratives in educational administration are imbued with psychological assumptions, Usher and Edwards may have discovered the reason scholars have not been able to lift the veil.. To review briefly Usher and Edwards' line of reasoning, psychology is constructed on a Cartesian platform in which the self as perceiver can see reality through the transparency of language and envision himself/herself "objectively," that is, in an "unmediated" fashion. This rational gaze, reflecting back on itself, can proclaim as Descartes did, "I think therefore I am" (see Exhibit 2). The notion that one can see reality in this "presence" has been challenged by the postmodernists, but earlier by Freud with his concept

Exhibit 2


The Stance of Psychology's Pose as a Science
I think-- therefore I am
Observed actions- language is trans- parent, culture is universal, context is not relevant
science
The interpretative traditions of a pre- understood world
Non-science

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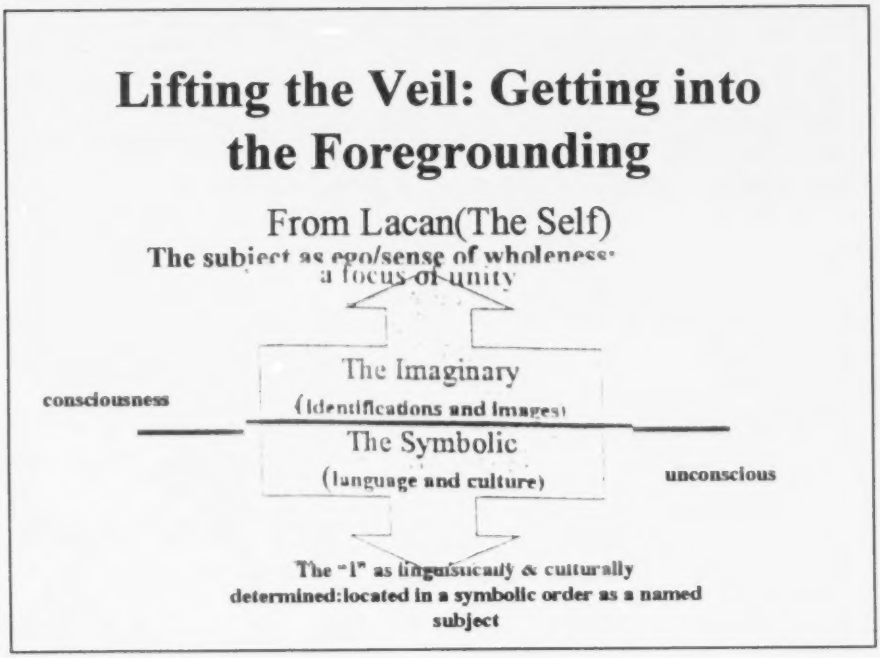
of the unconscious. Usher and Edwards reiterate Freud's position which was "I think where I am not, therefore, I am where I do not think "(p. 57).

The postmodernists point out the one cannot think without prejudice, that is, all perspectives are grounded in certain pre-assumptions which actively shape perception. All viewpoints exist within a network of beliefs and values which find expression in language itself. Language contains its own logic and rules which define and mold thinking. This pre-understood world is the center for the interpretive traditions which are the essence of consciousness. Psychology, particularly behavioral psychology, ignores this "pre" presence. It refuses to even deal with the questions as legitimate. This "lack of reflexivity" is a two-edged sword. On- the- one- hand it enables psychology to pose as a science. But on-the-other, it dooms psychology to remain on the periphery of the great interior issues regarding leadership. Such issues are concerned with the inner core of beliefs of a leader and deal with the active shaping of perception and outlook on the world. It means psychology will not deal with motivation except as a stimulus and response phenomenon. This simplistic model, however, is quantifiable and supremely manipulative. It has led to a great body of literature on behavioral learning. "Actions" are worthy of study because they can be classified and measured. Their impact on others can be judged by their responses.

The quantitative/qualitative debate has not helped either. In the end, qualitative researchers feel obliged to adhere to certain normative rules so that their researches can be "replicable". These rules or norms reinforce certain notions of objectivity imbedded in behavioral science such as data gathering which can be regularized (tracked) and re-counted or re-described in such a way as to be "audited" for trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; 301-331). Even Sara Lawrence Lightfoot (1997) in her book on portraiture insists on the methods of science being applied in her "word paintings". Such methods look for repetitive refrains that form patterns that can then be "triangulated" (p.193). Such portraits lead to richer surface hues but stop at the skin level in understanding why persons occupying leadership roles do what they do because they believe what they believe. Lightfoot's portraiture is dependent upon the exchange between a leader and the artist-researcher, which is one of its weaknesses in understanding the relationship between leaders and followers.

A more insightful approach is that of Lacan (1977) who examined leadership with a post-Freudian lens (see Exhibit 3). Lacan's work is a criticism of behavioral psychology, but it is implicitly a criticism of

Exhibit 3


Lifting the Veil: Getting into the Foregrounding
From Lacan(The Self)
The subject as ego/sense of wholeness: a focus of unity
The Imaginary
(Identifications and Images)
consciousness
The Symbolic
(language and culture)
unconscious
The "I" as linguistically & culturally determined:located in a symbolic order as a named subject

leadership theory because of psychology's influence in framing the concept of self. In Lacan's view the self straddles two worlds: the imaginative and the symbolic. The imaginary world is the one in which the ego or consciousness is grounded. This world is one of images and it proffers that the world is unified, the self is rational, and kind of "what you see is what you get" or more appropriately, "what you see is about all there is to see". The self as subject, however, is grounded in another world, that of the symbolic. The self's "otherness", i.e., that which the ego recognizes, is thoroughly grounded in the linguistic traditions and culture of others. In the case of a leader, these are the followers. But the rational self is unaware of the ways it has been shaped as it is simultaneously bound to the communicative patterns or discourse in which it is embedded (Foucault ,1974: 49; Usher and Edwards, 1996; 90).

Lacan's conjecture is unable to be considered by the current behavioral strictures at work in psychology and indeed which permeate educational administration as a discipline. Behaviorism is a metanarrative that refuses to examine interiority. Interiority is a label given to the aspects of leadership which are rooted in language, culture and context. As a scientist, the behaviorist is concerned only with observed actions. To do

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anything else is speculative and has no foundation supporting it. It is merely conjectures that can never be verified. Structuralism further de-emphasizes the individual and the leader in the process. Broad fields confines leadership to the individual perspectives of various academic disciplines, among them psychology. Critical theory and feminism are pre-structured by the lenses of class and gender. Psychology and sociology lack the necessary reflexivity to penetrate the veil surrounding leadership. .

Lacan's criticism of psychology and the limitations of psychological study has been echoed by Howard Gardner (1995)who has focused on what he has called, "a cognitive approach to leadership"(p. 15). Yet Gardner, while concentrating on the stories that leaders tell, refuses to consider Lacan's postmodernism, dismissing earlier claims of the psychoanalysts "whose interest has been directed chiefly at personality and motivation" (p. 15).

Gardner posited that leaders engage in story telling. They spin narratives that deal with topics followers find attractive. "It is *stories of identity*—narratives that help individuals think about and feel who they are, where they come from, and where they are headed—that constitute the single most powerful weapon in the leader's literary arsenal" (Gardner, 1995; 43).

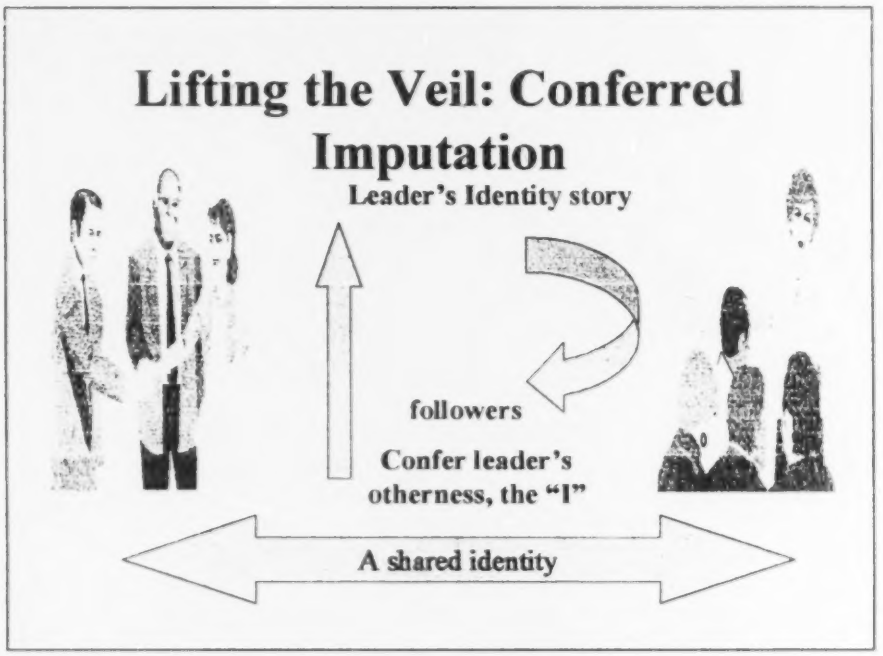
These narratives give rise to alternatives and rivals. The primary motivation leaders have for telling stories is to enable followers to develop plausible explanations that deal with identity and purpose. While Gardner gets right up to the point where he admits that such narratives are peculiar to context and culture, he declines a postmodern invitation by insisting that there is major signified meaning to such stories "that transcend the specific contexts in which words are uttered or messages are conveyed" (Gardner, 1995; 63).

Gardner's contribution is that he focuses on the dynamic interaction between leaders and followers and that he acknowledges that the connectivity between them lies in the messages sent to the followers from the leader. Lacan's approach is more encompassing and not so cognitive. Lacan also is less influenced by the traditional stance of psychology in limiting the researcher's gaze.

Lacan (1977) proffers the concept of conferred imputation as the tangible linkage between leaders and followers. A leader's subject is anchored in the responses of followers. This "otherness" is bestowed mutually . Lacan's concept of conferred imputation is a much more volatile, tangible and dynamic linkage with leaders/followers than Gardner's idea of the "message". It places followers on an equivalent plane within context, culture and linguistic traditions with leaders.

If Lacan's notion is the one we use to lift the veil of leadership, we are not only able to see the face of the leader more clearly, we are offered a more dynamic vision of the nature of leadership itself (see Exhibit 4)

Exhibit 4



The vanquished veil shows that leadership is a dialectic journey in which two parties (leaders/followers) anchor and immerse themselves in a stream of master signifiers which result in a new synthesis of shared identities. These encompassing identities are peculiar to context, culture, and linguistic traditions. Beyond knowing that leaders arise linked to followers with common narratives, we are unable to account for them unless and until we understand the dynamic and idiosyncratic social nature of the leader/follower dialogic.

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